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ABSTRACT

This study examined 10 years of prime time programming--from 1972 to 1981--to discover how television has portrayed women who work outside of the home, together with the new technologies of cable and satellite television, their current programming for and about working women, and the possibilities for the future. The programs selected for each year were the top 25 shows as rated by Nielsen's. The programs were divided by genre, and for those programs having one or more continuing female leads, each female character was coded for race, age, economic status, marital status, occupational category, and number of children under 18 years of age. Analyses of these data showed that women television characters tended to be younger then women in real life; tended to be white in race; tended to have a professional occupation; tended to be single and without children if they worked outside of the home; tended more to be married in the earlier part of the decade, but then less so by the early 1980s; and were more likely to appear in situation comedies than in action/crime programs. In comparison to male television characters, working women were underrepresented, especially in professional occupations. In addition, men on television were older than women, and more likely to be married. A discussion of the future of cable television observes that, since cable television programming targets specific segments of the population, working women are a sizable group with special viewing interests and they would be a likely target for programming services. (EW)

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

A LOOK AT WORKING WOMEN ON TELEVISION

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

A LOOK AT WORKING WOMEN ON TELEVISION

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NOVEMBER 1982

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? A LOOK AT WORKING WOMEN ON TELEVISION

INTRODUCTION

In its early days television was thought to be an entertaining toy, an insignificant source of diversion and pleasure. No one paid much attention to the social effects of the new phenomenon. That was before people discovered that Sesame Street could teach children to read and count; that violence on television could affect our view of the world; and that many of our stereotypes about men and women, about black people and white people, could be traced to what we see on TV.

Television's power to shape attitudes and influence behavior is recognized today, both by experts and the general public. There are times when parents can clearly observe the influence on their children; adults can find themselves inordinately attached to certain TV characters or getting TV's version of reality confused with what happened in actuality.

However, more often TV viewers cannot directly trace attitudes, thoughts or behavior to television. We're not at all sure what influence television has on us. One reason for this is that TV is just one influence among many in our lives. But another reason stems from the pervasive nature of the medium itself and the way we watch it. In the first half of 1982, the average American household watched television six hours and 50 minutes a day; on a typical Sunday evening, over 68 million households were watching TV. Because it is so much a part of our lives, television fades into the wallpaper, and is as taken for granted in our daily routine as the automobile or the telephone.

Therefore, it is important to step back on occasion and formally study the medium which we usually watch with less than full attention. By monitoring TV programs over a period of time, trends and themes emerge. We can more clearly see how fantasy and reality intersect. And we can determine the forms and patterns of the fantasy.

"What's Wrong With This Picture? A Look at Working Women on Television" is divided into two parts. The first section looks at 10 years of prime time programming to discover how television has portrayed one segment of our society, women who work outside the home. The report then examines the new technologies of cable and satellite television, their current programming for and about working women, and the possibilities for the future.

Research Methodology

The purpose of the research in section one of this report was to obtain specific demographic data about female television characters during a 10-year period and, by analyzing that data, to determine what image of working women television presented to the public during that time.

The period selected was 1972-1981, an era of social change for women in the real world when increasing numbers of them entered the workforce. The programs selected were the top 25 prime time network shows as determined by the Nielsen ratings for each year, in order to give an analysis of the shows watched by the most households. Throughout the first section of this report, all statements about the characters on television programs refer only to these top 25 shows.

The programs researched were divided into five major categories according to genre: family drama, medical drama, situation comedy, action/crime, and western/other. Movies of the Week, sports programming, and news and variety shows were excluded from the research since they did not portray the same cast of characters week after week. From the list of selected programs, only those with one or more continuing female characters were coded. This disqualified several all-male programs within the major categories, particularly the action/crime shows with consistently male leads. Based on this method of selection, 25-50 characters were coded for each year.

The female characters were individually coded for race, age, socio-economic status, marital status, occupational category, and number of children under 18 years of age. This information was obtained from television encyclopedias, source books, history texts, and TV Guides. Other sources included the television networks and production studios themselves.

Report Highlights

The top 25 shows in the Nielsen ratings from 1972-1981 were analyzed to discover how working women were portrayed on prime-time television during those years. The findings revealed that the image of working women at the end of the 10 years was not very different from that at the beginning. However, there were some significant image changes during the mid years of the decade; consequently, the 10-year span coded in this research can be seen as a bell curve, with much of the change occuring from 1976 to 1978. An overall look at the top television shows during these years produces the following observations:

- Women on television are younger than women in real life; almost half are in their 20's or early 30's. Women over 60 years of age, who in reality comprise almost 20% of the female population, are almost totally absent from the screen. This situation changed briefly in 1975, when the number of older women (over 40 years) increased to 45% of the female characters seen during that season.
- Women on television tend to be white; there is an under-representation of black women and an invisibility of Hispanic women on TV. Of the 55 programs that made it into the top 25 shows of the 1972-1981 seasons, only eight had at least one black female character. During two of those seasons, 1977 and 1978, there were no black female characters in the top shows at all.

- Female TV characters who work outside the home are much more likely to be in a professional occupation than real-life working women. At the beginning and end of the decade, about 50% of all women on TV who worked were in professional occupations, compared to 20% of real-life working women.
- Female TV characters who work are likely to be young and single; it is rare to find a two-income family with children on television. In contrast, about 30% of the total female workforce in the real world are married women with children under 18 years old.
- Compared to the real world, there is an overabundance of wealthy and upper middle class women on television. In 1981 they constituted 35% of all female characters.
- In the early 70's, almost half of all female TV characters were likely to be married; this changed mid-decade as the number of single women on television increased to a high of 63%; by 1981 the percentage of married women in TV shrank to less than half of the total.
- Female TV characters are more likely to appear in situation comedies than in action/crime programs. In 1973, 28% of the top 25 prime-time shows had no continuing female characters. All of these programs were action/adventure shows.

Although the focus of this report is television's image of working women, it is important to note that the image of men on television also deviates from real-life men. However, men are distorted in different ways than women.

To get a glimpse of TV's portrayal of men as a way of evaluating the portrayal of women in context, male TV characters were coded for the top 25 prime-time shows during the 1980 season. The methodology used was almost identical to that used in coding women.

The results revealed that whereas working women tend to be underrepresented on TV, working men are overrepresented. In 1980, 100% of male TV characters were employed, 73% of them in professional occupations. In reality, only 77% of the male population was in the workforce in 1980 and of those, only 29% were in professional occupations.

Men on TV also tend to be older than women. In 1980, 44% of all male TV characters were 40-59 years old, while only 23% of female characters were that age. In addition, 22% of all male TV characters were married, while only 6% of working women on TV were married.

The Early 70's

In the early part of the decade, TV programming began to reflect the social changes of the time such as the civil rights and women's movements. These social issue programs received high ratings, and gave birth to similar shows. For example, All in the Family was the parent show of both The Jeffersons and Maude; Maude then gave birth to Good Times. In 1974, the percentage of black female characters in the top 25 prime-time shows rose to 21%, the highest percentage for the entire decade.

One of the major social changes of the decade was the growing number of women entering the workforce--an increase of 13 million working women between 1970 and 1980. This change was reflected to some extent in television. At the beginning of the 70's, about 32% of all women on TV were homemakers; this number increased somewhat mid-decade, but then decreased to 19% in 1981.

As women in the real world went to work, the early 70's saw the emergence of programs featuring characters who were working women. In 1972, working women on TV were almost half of all female TV characters. This percentage is close to the actual participation of real working women at this time. (In 1972, 44% of adult women were in the labor force.) On television working women were employed predominantly in professional occupations: 60% of them had professional jobs in 1972 compared with 20% in actuality. For example, The Mary Tyler Moore Show featured a single professional woman in her 30's; Margaret Houlihan (M.A.S.H.) was an Army nurse; and Pepper Anderson (Police Woman) was a police woman.

Although most female TV characters who worked were single, there were three working couples on TV in 1972. The working women in these couples were also in professional occupations. Emily (The Bob Newhart Show) and Bridget (Bridget Loves Bernie) were school teachers, and Jill (The Rookies) was a nurse.

However, many of the popular social issue shows of the early 70's featured women who were married and not working outside the home. In fact, about half of the women on television at this time did not work for pay. Maude, an "independent" woman, remained a full-time homemaker until

she entered electoral politics. Edith Bunker (All in the Family) worked outside the home sporadically, and Louise Jefferson (The Jeffersons) did volunteer work. Rhoda (Rhoda) got married in 1974 and remained a full-time homemaker for that entire season.

The Mid 70's

Mid-decade saw a variety of changes in the prime-time image of women workers, introducing the kind of working women characterizations seen in Charlie's Angels, Three's Company and Laverne and Shirley. Until the mid 70's, almost half of all female TV characters were married. But from 1976 to 1978, the percentage of single characters jumped to over 60% of all women on prime-time TV. Accordingly, in 1978, the percentage of female TV characters who supported themselves financially rather than depending on another's income increased to over half of all characters for the first time in the decade.

In addition, female TV characters became younger. In the early 70's about 30% of women on TV were over 40 years old. Although the percentage of older women increased to 45% in 1975, by the next year it dropped sharply, so that during the mid 70's, women over 40 years were only about 20% of all women on TV.

Another mid-decade change concerned race: in both 1977 and 1978, 100% of the prime-time female characters in the top 25 shows were white. The Jeffersons slipped in popularity that year, as did Good Times.

(Esther Rolle left Good Times after a disagreement concerning J.J. as a role model for young blacks.) What's Happening! also dropped in the ratings after 1976 and was cancelled in 1979. What remained were all-white situation comedies and family shows such as Eight Is Enough, The Ropers, Three's Company, and Charlie's Angels.

Surprisingly, the number of female TV characters in the workforce showed a slight decline from the early 70's, from about half of the total to 34% in 1976. Those TV characters who did work outside the home tended to be in non-professional occupations, an increase from the early 70's. In fact, by 1978 the percentage of female TV characters in non-professional occupations reached 64%. Laverne and Shirley premiered in 1975, featuring two women working in a bottling factory. In 1975, Rhoda returned to work as a window dresser. Three's Company's Chrissy and Janet were a secretary and florist clerk respectively. Gloria Bunker (All in the Family) sold cosmetics to support her husband's education. Alice premiered with three waitresses as main characters. Elaine (Taxi) broke into an area considered non-traditional for women and drove a taxi cab, while Betty (Barnaby Jones) and Florence (The Jeffersons) worked in the traditional female occupations of secretary and maid.

Those female TV characters not in the paid workforce constituted two thirds of the total in 1976, the highest percentage for the decade. Women who were full-time homemakers made up a large part of this percentage. Most of these women were mothers. Caroline Ingalls (Little House on the Prairie) had four girls, and Olivia (The Waltons) had seven children. Marion (Happy Days) was yet another mother set in a different time period.

There were older women on TV without children under 18 who were also full-time homemakers during this time, such as Jessica and Mary (Soap), Louise and Helen (The Jeffersons) and Edith (All in the Family.) The remaining female TV characters not in the paid workforce were younger females who were students.

The Late 70's/Early 80's

At the close of the decade and the beginning of the 80's, most female characters continued to be young; in 1981, 73% of women on television were under 40 years old, compared to only 56% of the real life female population. The percentage of female TV characters in the workforce increased somewhat from 34% in 1976 to 44% in 1981. The real life female workforce, however, has been growing at a faster rate. In 1980, 60% of the real female population was in the labor force.

The percentage of female TV characters in non-professional jobs decreased from its mid-decade high of 64%, but was still higher than the early 70's. In 1981, 57% of women working on TV were in non-professional occupations as opposed to 80% in real life. Flo, a spin-off from Alice, premiered with Flo the waitress in her own restaurant. Daisy was occasionally seen as a bartender in Dukes of Hazzard. Archie Bunker's Place introduced two new characters, Veronica, the cook, and Ellen, the housekeeper. Both Jennifer (WKRP In Cincinnati) and Jackie (Too Close for Comfort) were secretaries.

About 40% of the female television workforce was made up of professional women in 1981. Programs that featured working women in professional occupations were Trapper John M.D. with Ripples Brancusi and

Ernestine Shoop as nurses, Love Boat with Julie McCoy as cruise director, CHIPS with Bonnie as a patrol car "chippie", House Calls with Ann as a hospital administrator, and Too Close for Comfort with Muriel as a professional photographer.

At the beginning of the 80's, female TV characters not in the paid workforce constituted 56% of all women on TV, a slight decline from the mid 70's but about the same as the early part of the decade. However, in a marked departure from the characterizations of the early decade, only 19% of these women were full-time homemakers. The lifestyle of female television characters changed because they became rich. The number of affluent women on television increased dramatically during the 1978 through 1981 seasons from less than 1% in the early 70's to 23% in 1981. This resulted from the success of new prime-time drama series such as Dallas, Dynasty, Falcon Crest and the action/adventure Hart to Hart. These TV characters were part of a leisure class who didn't need to work either in the home or in the paid labor force. Most of these women were dependent upon family wealth, primarily their husband's, for their economic survival. Pam and Sue Ellen married into wealth on Dallas, as did Krystle on Dynasty. Both Fallon's (Dynasty) and Lucy's (Dallas) money was inherited. When these women did work outside the home, they often unrealistically attained instant success, regardless of their education, occupational training, or previous work experience. Bobby (Dallas) bought Pam an exercise business to manage, and Lucy was an immediate success in her modeling career.

Ten Year Overview

One area which shows no change over the entire 10-year coding period is the visibility of Hispanic women on television. There were no Hispanic female characters featured in the top 25 prime-time programs for the entire 10-year span. In the real population, Hispanic women made up 5% of the total population and 4% of the female workforce in 1979. On television, however, the Hispanic woman has been invisible. In the entire prime-time programming schedule there were no Hispanic females featured, with the exception of Consuelo Lopez on Marcus Welby, M.D. Even on programs like Chico and the Man which featured Hispanics, there were no continuing female characters.

Also lacking on television during the 10-year period was the presence of two-income couples where both partners worked. In 10 years there have been only 11 two-income couples, and of those, only four had children. When TV wives did work, they generally held traditional jobs. Abby (Eight is Enough), Emily (The Bob Newhart Show), and Bridget (Bridget Loves Bernie) were all school teachers. Margaret (M.A.S.H.) and Jill (The Rookies) were nurses.

When both partners worked, TV rarely showed the male sharing the household or child care duties. Although both Abby and Tom (Eight is Enough) worked full-time, Abby was usually in the kitchen after work while Tom was in his den working. (Although fathers were not available for most child care duties, some were available for talks and discipline in their den.) Most television programs implied that the husband's work was more important than the wife's. Although TV programs often showed viewers the male's

workplace, they rarely featured the female's workplace. For example, Emily Hartley (The Bob Newhart Show) was a school teacher, yet most of the program was set in Bob's office or their apartment. Emily was not seen at work, nor was her work a topic of discussion. The same was true for Eight is Enough. Tom was sometimes seen working at the newspaper, but Abby's work as a teacher was not seen. An exception was Rhoda which showed both partners at their work. After she returned to her job as a window dresser, Rhoda frequently called Joe at his office from her own office; thus both workplaces were part of the show's setting.

The Current Picture

Although some of the new programs in the 1982 fall TV season feature working women, most of them are familiar versions of what's already on the air. There's a young, beautiful woman detective (Remington Steele), a young, beautiful office manager to a handsome male private detective (Matt Houston), a beautiful wife/handsome husband detective team (The Good Witch of Laurel Canyon), young attractive waitresses (Cheers), and a beautiful wife/mother architect who works at home (Family Ties). In Remington Steele, the female detective solves all the crimes and then willingly allows a front man to get the credit for her hard work.

At the writing of this report it is too early to tell which new programs will find sufficient audience acceptance to survive the season. It is also too early to tell how the female TV characters will develop on those shows which do survive. It is disappointing, however, that so many of the new programs continue to emphasize female characters who are young, pretty, and white.

At the present time 60% of all adult women are in the paid workforce; 30% of these working women are over 45 and more than 14% of them are women of color. However, TV has not caught up with this reality. Like advertising, it is still presenting an image of a woman whose role hasn't changed in 20 years. The most unrealistic aspect of both programming and advertising is the failure to show the growth in employment of women, which has more than doubled in the past 30 years. Just as advertising needs to show women in a variety of roles, using products other than cosmetics and household cleaners, TV also needs to move away from limited female images toward a more realistic picture of women who have many interests, including work.

In 1979 the National Commission on Working Women conducted a national survey to determine the problems of working women. It discovered that women in the workforce are concerned about decent wages, child care, getting more education and training, and improving their jobs. Yet these are issues that characters on television never seem to struggle with. Stretching a pay check, getting to work when the kids are sick, or trying to get promoted to a better job, rarely preoccupy female TV characters. In fact, they seem to have no financial worries at all.

It is true that much of television's appeal lies in its escapist nature--no one wants to come home and see a literal replay of her workday. In order to engage the viewer, however, TV must provide a base of reality in its characters and plots--there must be some links to the viewer's own life. But when working women watch television in the evening, they are likely to see a fantasy world of female characters whose lives bear no relationship to their own. Television, in its search for that perfect blend of fantasy and reality, has overemphasized fantasy in its portrayals of working women; the reality is hard to find.

The Future of the Networks

In the past few years, the networks have been losing viewers to other forms of entertainment, such as cable and pay TV, whose programming is often targeted to specific audiences. The networks have lost 10% of their viewers in the last three years, and that loss is expected to increase by another 20% in the next seven years. The networks' dilemma is how to vie with this new competition and halt the erosion of their audience. The challenge for the new technologies is to continue luring viewers away from broadcast television by offering them quality programming they are willing to pay for. For working women, a sizable segment of the population. this would mean having program choices that are not available on network television. The second section of "A Look at Working Women on Television" discusses this challenge and the growth of cable television.

SECTION TWO

Cable: Its Growth, Its Problems

Cable television is the fastest growing segment of the telecommunications industry today. Born in 1948, when community antenna services were developed in areas where there was no local broadcasting station and reception from distant stations was poor or impossible because of topographic obstruction, cable television now adds 250,000 subscribers per month nationwide. The number of basic subscribers has grown to a total of 27 million in more than 13,000 communities across the country. The cable industry creates 1,000 new jobs every month, and industry-wide revenues this year will exceed $4 billion, something of an achievement in today's economy. While it is predicted that the marketplace for cable programming will continue to expand, the industry is not problem-free and has suffered considerable financial failures. An example is the CBS Cable performing arts network, which was created in 1981 with lavish funding. Although critically acclaimed, it lost $30 million in its first year and it was disbanded in 1982.

Cable services have failed to survive because of a variety of problems but the most urgent one for the industry that includes more than two dozen advertiser-supported networks is the need to attract more advertising revenue. This is difficult to accomplish given advertiser demand for a clear picture of the audience they are buying and the lack of accurate cable audience data. Although some cable networks and operators

are responding to advertiser demands by subscribing to the Nielsen ratings, many cable programmers claim that the established ratings systems do not fit the new industry's mold and that new methods of audience measurement must be devised for the medium.

The pay cable networks are faring somewhat better, although they have relied heavily on movies for their programming, and therefore have to compete aggressively with other cable programmers, pay services, and the networks for a limited supply of popular movies. Attempts to augment movie fare with original programming have been limited and have not proven as attractive to subscribers.

Another problem faced by the cable industry is the advent of new low-cost technologies that transmit programming over the air rather than through wires. While earthbound cable operators engage in lengthy negotiations for franchises and lay costly underground cable, pay program services are competing for their market, using satellite and microwave to beam their shows to subscribers at much less expense.

Cable Programming: Something New or More of the Same?

Although cable television has many similarities to broadcast television, one significant difference between the two is the size of the audience they seek to attract. The broadcast networks have always tried to engage the broadest possible audience by airing programs with mass appeal. Cable, on the other hand, which is in only 18.8% of all households with television, cannot compete with broadcast television for as many million viewers. Its programming strategy has been to "narrowcast," to target special interest audiences with programs that appeal to those

interests such as sports or health. In this way, cable is more similar to radio than TV.

"Cable is television's second chance" is the way that one cable program host puts it. He feels that the absence of a ratings system has enabled cable programs to be more creative since they are not constrained to attract a mass audience but rather to "deliver a service that will satisfy a subscriber enough to pay the bill when it comes in at the end of the month."

Cable TV programming is quite different from the broadcast networks in that cable networks don't produce situation comedies, dramas, westerns, action/adventure shows, and the other types of entertainment programs which are the staple of ABC, CBS and NBC. With the exception of Hollywood movies and sports, cable programming consists mainly of news and information/talk shows which are relatively low budget.

Because cable television focuses on specific segments of the population rather than the undifferentiated mass, the 53% of all adult women who work outside the home are a likely target for programming services. The opportunity exists in cable to present a realistic, representative picture of these working women and to avoid the reality gap perpetuated in many of the prime-time broadcast entertainment shows. Cable television has the potential to tap a ready-made market for programs that working women can identify with and learn from.

The most ambitious programming aimed at women to date has come from Hearst/ABC Video Services. Daytime devotes four hours daily to the interests of women. Segments cover subjects such as health, food, gardening, exercise, parenting and conversations with well-known people. The show is aimed primarily at women at home.

It's About You from USA Cable Network is a woman's show with a magazine format on subjects such as health, beauty, exercise and business. The same network produces Alive and Well, a daily two hour show about health and well-being, Better Homes and Gardens Idea Notebook, and Woman's Day USA, a consumer advice show.

The Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) has a half hour show, Sportswoman which profiles women athletes, covers women's sporting events, and gives health and diet information. Women the Achievers, profiling women who are successful in their field, has aired twice as a pilot show on USA Network, and Woman Watch, a show about "interesting, determined, career-oriented women," has been sponsored by the Campbell Soup Company after a thoroughly researched pilot test on WTBS, the Ted Turner-owned station in Atlanta. (One reviewer held out the possibility that this show might ferret out and feature fascinating achievers similar to those occasionally profiled by the early Ms. Magazine.)

WTBS is currently planning another program for women. Described as "an intelligent woman's show," it will air five days a week and present live coverage of news, sports and weather, current events and regular features, all from a woman's perspective.

Whether or not these shows are seen by working women depends on what time of day they are scheduled. Although the majority of working women are out of the house for most of the day,the advantage of cable programs is that they are often repeated several times a week in different time slots and therefore are likely to be seen by women who work.

The Future of Cable

Since many of these cable programs have come into existence within the past year, it is difficult to predict their future. It is also difficult to predict how upcoming shows will differ in format from these early ones. But the nature of cable television does give some clue as to what its future might be.

Cable TV might offer pay programming and services targeting working women who would choose to (and could afford to) subscribe to them, somewhat like an electronic magazine subscription. There have been plans for cable programs produced by cosmetic or food companies with the programs' content related to beauty, fashion, or nutrition. Perhaps General Motors or Radio Shack could create programs for working women about easy car maintenance or home computer uses. Such joint cable ventures as ABC-Hearst suggest that programmers expect to find resources in women's magazines and that publishers, in turn, are looking for new outlets for their products.

Professional working women, perceived by advertisers and programmers to have disposable income, are already the target of some cable programming. It is important, as the medium develops, that the interests and needs of all working women be addressed. Programs focusing on child care, legal rights in the workplace, and the double burden of job and family, would find a receptive audience, as would educational programming that provides college credit or career training.

Perhaps one of cable's greatest benefits to working women will be the provision of services such as the time-saving opportunity to shop at home via all-advertising channels. An experiment in Peabody, Massachusetts, called Cableshop, allowed viewers to tune into three all-ad channels, and was relatively successful after one year, according to advertisers.

The promotion of any new industry includes claims and promises for the future. In the case of cable television the claims have appeared unrealistically rosy so far. By and large, programs have not differed much from those aired by the networks. For example, cable TV talk shows, with some minor exceptions, bear strong resemblance to their broadcast TV counterparts. Cable TV has not yet developed programming unique to the medium.

According to industry experts, there is the likelihood that cable TV subscriptions will eventually equal the average monthly telephone bill. This implies that people will be willing to pay for cable programming if it is significantly different from what can be seen free of charge on network television. Working women, a sizable group with special viewing interests, are receptive to services that save them time and to programming that reflects something of the reality of their lives. If it lives up to its promise, cable TV has great potential to serve this ready-made audience.

Conclusion

Women are continuing to enter the workforce in record numbers; by 1990 they are expected to comprise over half of all workers. Working women confront problems on the job such as wage discrimination and sexual harassment. On the home front, they face the difficulties of finding quality child care, and of balancing family life with job, while still having some leisure time for themselves.

A recent government report on television from the National Institutes of Health supports facts that many viewers already know: that on television the world of work is the world of men, and that male TV characters

care about job first and family second while the reverse is true for female characters. The study also found that women on TV do all the food preparation and housework, while men are seen at their jobs, and that there are relatively few working wives. This disparity between the world of TV and reality feeds outdated notions of feminine behavior and does not reflect the diversity of women's interests, roles and skills, both in and out of the home. There is scant recognition of the fact that women work for the same reasons that men do: they need money and they want personal fulfillment. While this truth is gradually gaining recognition in the real world, old beliefs die hard, especially when they are supported by the popular medium of television.

Since TV is such an important influence in all of our lives, the powerful effects of stereotyping on the little screen should not be underestimated. Women can ill-afford mass media stereotypes that depict them as being radically different from male workers when they have yet to achieve full equality in the workplace.